

WORK IN US AND WORK BY US

NO. 914

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 6, 1870,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working
which works in me mightily.”
Colossians 1:29.*

THE apostle Paul could very truthfully assert that he labored and agonized. When the Holy Spirit had anointed the apostles, they all became ardent enthusiasts for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom. Having the whole world committed to them that they might enlighten it, they labored most ardently each one in his sphere to spread abroad the truth of the Gospel, but the apostle of the Gentiles labored more abundantly than they all. Into how many countries did he carry the testimony of Christ! How often did he cross the sea, traverse mountains, and ford rivers!

One sees in his career something more than an ordinary Christian life, he was so indefatigable in service, that surely nothing beyond could have been possible to humanity, even under the help of God. His public labors were not only abundant, but they were the cause of continual inward conflict. He never preached a sermon, wrote epistle, or attempted a work without earnest prayer and soul-consuming zeal. Night and day with tears he said of a certain church that he had labored for its good. He was a man so whole-hearted and intense in all that he did, that we ought to remember not merely the amount of his labors, but the way in which he wore out himself by the intensity of his zeal in them.

Probably no other man led a more intensely ardent life than he. Moreover, added to all this, he carried a weight of care enough to crush him, for there came upon him the care of all the churches—to plant them, to defend them against rising errors, to prevent schisms from dividing the flock, to lead the converts from grace to grace; to instruct them, and to present everyone perfect before God. The burden resting upon the apostle was greater than the cares of an empire, and then, as if to complete the whole, he was called to suffer persecutions of which he has given us a list, which as we read it makes us shudder that one man could have endured so much, and makes us also glory in humanity that it should be possible that so much could be borne and done for God by a single individual.

Yet, note it well, the apostle takes no honor to himself, but humbly ascribes whatever he had done or suffered entirely to his Lord. He declares that he labored and agonized, but he confesses that it was through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who mightily by the Holy Spirit wrought in him. In another place, when he had mentioned his abundant labors, he added, “Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” He remembered where to put the crown, he took care not to steal an atom of the glory for himself, but he ascribed all to the power of Him who loved him and gave Himself for him. Let us imitate the apostle in these two things.

My brethren, let us live, while we live, a life of energy, but let us at the same time confess, when we have done all, that we are unprofitable servants, and if there be any glory and any praise resulting from the work which we achieve, let us be careful to lay it all at the Redeemer's feet.

The doctrine of the text upon which I intend to preach this morning, as I may be enabled, is this, it is clear from what Paul has here said, that the work of Christ in us and for us does not exempt us from work and service, nor does the Holy Spirit's work supersede human effort, but rather excites it. Paul speaks of an inner work, a mighty work wrought in him, but he also declares, “Whereunto I also labor, striving.” So that the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit is not intended in any degree to lull our minds into sloth, but wherever the Holy Spirit works He makes men work, He works in us to will and to

do of His own good pleasure, that we also may work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. I shall try to illustrate this truth in the two respects, first, in reference to *a man's own salvation*, and secondly, in the matter of *the Christian man's ministry for the salvation of others*. The work of the Holy Spirit does not supersede Christian effort in either case.

I. First, then, IN THE BELIEVER'S SALVATION.

We believe, each one of us, and we have scriptural warrant for it, that if any man be saved, the work within his soul is entirely wrought by the Holy Ghost. Man is dead in sin, and the dead cannot raise themselves from the grave. Quickening and spiritual resurrection must be accomplished by divine power. Man must be born again, and this birth must be effected by divine power, for unless a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. As the commencement of salvation is dependent upon the Holy Spirit, so is the carrying of it on. "Without me you can do nothing," is Christ's testimony. We shall never persevere except as grace shall keep us from falling, nor may we hope to be presented faultless before the august presence except as the Holy Spirit shall sanctify us from day to day, and make us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

I trust, my brethren, I need not do more than assert this doctrine in your hearing, since you know how continually we insist upon it, and our trumpet never gives an uncertain sound as to the great truth that God works all our works in us, and that salvation is of the Lord from first to last. But at this present time we intend to insist upon this further truth, that the working of the Holy Spirit in us does not exempt the believer from the most energetic labor, but rather necessitates his doing all that lies in him.

To enforce this we remark, first, that *the Christian life is always described as a thing of energy*. Sometimes we read of it as a pilgrimage. That master allegorist, John Bunyan, has not pictured Christian as carried to heaven while asleep in an easy chair. He makes Christian lose his burden at the cross-foot, he ascribes the deliverance of the man from the burden of his sin entirely to the Lord Jesus, but he represents him as climbing the Hill Difficulty, ay, and on his hands and knees too, Christian has to descend into the Valley of Humiliation, and to tread that dangerous pathway through the gloomy horrors of the Shadow of Death.

He has to be urgently watchful to keep himself from sleeping in the Enchanted Ground. Nowhere is he delivered from the necessities incident to the way, for even at the last he fords the black river, and struggles with its terrible billows. Effort is used all the way through, and you that are pilgrims to the skies will find it to be no allegory, but a real matter of fact, your soul must gird up her loins, you need your pilgrim's staff and armor, and you must foot it all the way to heaven, contending with giants, fighting with lions, and combating Apollyon himself.

Our life is in Scripture represented as a race which is even sterner work than pilgrimage. In such footraces as were witnessed among the Greeks, in every case the man spent all the strength there was in him, and underwent a training beforehand, that he might be fit for the contest. It sometimes happened, and indeed not seldom, that men fell dead at the winning-post through their extreme exertions. Running to heaven is such running as that, we are to strain every nerve. It requires all the power we have, and more in order to win that incorruptible crown which now glitters before the eyes of our faith. If we are so to run that we may obtain, we shall have no energy to spare, but shall spend it all in our heavenly course.

Not infrequently the apostle compares our spiritual life to a boxing match, and the terms in the original Greek if they were translated into pure vernacular English, would remind us very much of a boxing ring and of the place where wrestlers strive for mastery. To wit, in that notable passage, "I keep under my body," we are told by scholars that the Greek word alludes to the getting of the antagonist's head under the arm, and dealing it heavy blows. So the flesh must be mortified. The wrestlers in the Greek and Roman games strained every muscle and sinew, there was no part of the body that was not brought into action to overthrow their adversary. For this they agonized till often blood would spurt from the nostrils, and veins would burst. Such, in a spiritual sense must be the agony of a Christian if he is to overcome temptation, and subdue the power of sin.

Ah brethren! it is no child's play to win heaven. Saved, as I repeat it, through the power of Christ's blood and with the energy of His Holy Spirit within us, yet we have no time to loiter, no space in which to trifle, we must labor, striving according to His working who works in us mightily. All the figures which represent the Christian life imply the most energetic exertion.

Secondly, be it remarked *that there is no illustration used in Scripture to set forth the heavenly life, which allows the supposition that in any case heaven is won by sloth.* I do not remember ever finding in Scripture the life of the Christian described as a slumber. To the sluggard I always find a warning always, thorns and thistles in his garden, and rags and disease in his person. "The hand of the diligent makes rich." There may be occasional opportunities by which even idle men may become wealthy, but such spiritual wealth I have never heard of. I find that wherever the Spirit of God comes upon men, it never leaves a saved man effortless or fruitless, but as soon as it descends upon him, according to his capacity he begins to work out his own salvation. Remember the question of the inspired writer, "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" Her faith saved her, and though it was very weak and very ignorant faith, it made her work, and therefore she hid the spies to save their lives.

Look at the dying thief, with his hands and feet fastened to the wood, and ready to expire, yet he rebuked the reviling malefactor, thus doing all he possibly could for his Lord, in whom he trusted for salvation, what more could he have done? It may be said of him, "He has done what he could." It shall be well if as much can be said of us. No, brethren, you cannot be carried to heaven on "flowery beds of ease." You must fight if you would reign, you must stem the flood, you must breast the waves if you mean to reach the further shore. Grace will help you, else were the work an impossibility, but even with the aid of grace you are not permitted to slumber into glory, nor sleep your way to the celestial throne. You must be up and doing, watching diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God. The trumpet sounds, and not the dulcimer, the call is to conflict, not to feasting.

I would next bid you note, dear friends, that *it is natural it should be so*, it is unavoidable in the nature of things, that when the Holy Spirit comes He should not beget a spirit of slumber, but awaken us to diligent action. It is natural, I say, because one of the first results of the Holy Spirit's entrance into a man's heart is to let him see his sin and his danger. If I feel myself guilty, and perceive that God is angry with me, and that I shall be cast by and by into the lake of fire, what is the inevitable result? Shall I not hear a voice crying, "Escape for your life! Look not behind you! Stay not in all the plain"? Wherever the Holy Ghost works a sense of sin, the sinner is compelled to cry, "What must I do to be saved?"

Never does the Spirit effectually show a man his sin, and then leave him to fold his arms and ask for "a little more sleep and a little more slumber." No, the awakened soul exclaims, "I am guilty, I am accursed of God. How can I escape? Lord help me, help me now to find rest if rest is to be found!"

Then the Holy Spirit further reveals to us the excellence of the salvation of Christ, the happiness of those who rest in Jesus, the future reward of such as serve God on earth. And what is the result? The enlightened soul cries, "I fain would find this pearl of great price, I fain would be enriched by an interest in Christ, I too, would, with the blessed, take my everlasting heritage." See you not then that the Holy Ghost cannot make a man appreciate salvation without at the same time creating a desire to gain it, out of which arises prayer for the promised blessing? After a man has found Christ to the pardon of his sin, the Holy Spirit is pleased to endear Christ more and more to him. It is the office of the Spirit to take of the things of Christ, and show them to us.

Now, my brethren, you know very well that whenever you have a sight of the preciousness of Christ, you are moved at once to glorify Him. Do you not cry—

*"Oh, for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior's praises speak"?*

I know it is so! It is because we think so little of Christ that we do so little for Him, but when Christ is brought with vivid power home to the mind, then at once we cry, "Lord, what would You have me to do?" and we, by His Grace, bestir ourselves to honor Him.

Brethren, the fact that the Holy Spirit is working in a man, never can be a reason for his not working, on the contrary, the moment a man perceives that the Spirit is helping him, he is encouraged diligently to labor. "Why," says he, "*my* work may fail, but if it be the Spirit's work, it cannot fail." I bow my knee in prayer, and if I believe that all acceptable prayer is wrought in me by the Holy Spirit, I am fully assured that God will not refuse to grant what He Himself by His Spirit suggests to me to ask. If the Holy One of Israel Himself breaks my heart and leads me to long after a Savior, surely He does not intend to tantalize me, He will continue His work till He has saved me.

Thus encouraged, a man is certain to give diligence to make his calling and election sure. Moreover every intelligent man feels that if he does not work when the Spirit of God is working in him, he is dishonoring that Divine Person, and is running the solemn peril of committing the sin against the Holy Ghost which shall never be forgiven him. He feels that if he should be slothful that text would condemn him, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Neglect, mere neglect, nobody ever gets to heaven by it, but ah, how many perish by that alone!

To conclude this point, *it is most certain that all saving acts must be performed by the man himself.* Faith is the gift of God, but the Holy Ghost never believed for anybody, it is not His office to believe. The sinner must believe. Repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit never repented. What had He to repent of? He has done no ill. It cannot be possible for Him to repent for us. Nay, we ourselves must repent. My brethren, this is self-evident to every candid mind. There must be in every man a personal faith, and a personal repentance, and though these are wrought in him by the Holy Spirit, yet they are his own acts, they cannot be the acts of anybody else, or else the man has not believed, and has not repented, and there is no life in him. Right on to the end of the Christian life all those acts which bring us into communion with God are our own.

For instance, the Holy Ghost helps men to pray. He helps their infirmities. But *they* pray, *they themselves* pray. Prove to me that the man does not himself pray, and I will be bold to tell you that he is not saved. The intercession of Christ is prevalent, but it will not save those who live and die without praying for themselves. True desires after God must be your own desires. The desire is wrought in you, but still it is yours. And the expression of that desire is helped by the teaching of the Spirit, but still it is your own expression, or else what are you but a dead soul? There must be a voluntary putting forth on your part of the life which is quickened in you by the Spirit. This is so plain as to be self-evident.

Note again, if we were not made active, but are simply acted on by the Holy Ghost, there is a reduction of manhood to materialism. If the man does not believe nor pray, and if spiritual acts are not a man's own acts, but the acts of another in him, then what is the man? There is no moral good or moral evil in a work which is not my own—I mean no moral good or evil to me. A work which I do not myself perform may be creditable or discreditable to somebody else, it is neither to me. Take an illustration. In the Square of St. Mark, at Venice, at certain hours the bell of the clock is struck by two bronze figures as large as life, wielding hammers. Now nobody ever thought of presenting thanks to those bronze men for the diligence with which they have struck the hours, of course not, they cannot help it, they are wrought upon by machinery, and they strike the hours from necessity.

Some years ago a stranger was upon the top of the tower, and incautiously went too near one of these bronze men, his time was come to strike the hour, and he knocked the stranger from the battlement of the tower and killed him, nobody said the bronze man ought to be hanged, nobody ever laid it to his charge at all. There was no moral good or moral evil, because there was no will in the concern. It was not a moral act, because no mind and heart gave consent to it. Am I to believe that grace reduces men to this? I tell you, sirs, if you think to glorify the grace of God by such a theory, you know not what you do. To carve blocks, and move logs, is small glory, but this is the glory of God's grace, that without

violating the human will, He yet achieves His own purposes, and treating men as men, He conquers their hearts with love, and wins their affections by His grace.

I warn any here present, who imagine that man is a merely passive being in salvation, against putting their theory in practice. I am alarmed for you if you say, "God will save me if He so decrees, and therefore I will sit still and wait." My hearer, I am afraid for you, you are neglecting the great salvation, and I again remind you of the warning, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" I confess, I have no hope for you. But on the contrary, if you cry, "Lord, save, or I perish," I have good hope for you, you shall not perish, the Spirit of God is working in you these desires and this longing and seeking. Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. I pray you check not your aspirations. Quench not the Spirit. Led and guided by His mighty working, come to the foot of Christ's cross, trust alone to Him, and a voice shall sound in your heart, "Your sins which are many, are all forgiven you." God grant it may be so!

II. We shall now turn to the second part of our subject, in reference to THE MINISTRY OF THE SAINTS FOR THE CONVERSION OF OTHERS.

The Holy Spirit alone can convert a soul. All the ministries in the world put together, be they what they may, are utterly powerless for the salvation of a single soul apart from the Holy Ghost "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit says the LORD." But wherever the Holy Spirit works, as a general rule (so general that I scarcely know an exception), it is in connection with the earnest efforts of Christian men. This is clear, first, *from the example of the text*. The apostle Paul certifies that the salvation of souls is the sole work of Christ, but he declares that he labored, and the next word he adds is "striving," or as in the Greek, "agonizing." Though the Spirit did the work, it was in connection with the apostle's labor and agony for souls.

Now, my brethren, laboring implies abundant work. No man can be said to labor who only does half an hour's work in a day. A man who is a thorough laborer makes long hours, and is ever at it. The apostle Paul was this. The winning of souls was not a piece of by-play with him, it was his one objective to which he consecrated everything. He was "in labors more abundant." In the morning he sowed his seed, and in the evening he withheld not his hand. If we are to have souls saved we must do the same. No tradesman expects his shop to prosper who has it open only one hour a day, and you must not expect to be soul-winners if you only now and then seek to be such. There must be, as far as time and capacity allow, the consecration of yourselves to this work, even to an abundance of effort.

Labor, again, means hard work. It is not trifling. He is no laborer who takes the spade to play with it as a little child upon the sand. He that labors works till the sweat streams from his face, and he that would win souls will find that, though it is all of the Holy Spirit, yet it involves on his part the sternest form of spiritual work. Baxter used to say if any minister found his ministry easy, he would find it hard to answer for it at the day of judgment, and I add, if any one of you teaching in your classes, or officiating in any form of Christian work, find it easy, you will find it hard to give an account of your stewardship at the Lord's coming.

The labor must be personal labor, for no man is a laborer who does it through his servants. He may be an employer, and in a certain sense he may be said to do the work, but he cannot say, "I labor." The apostle performed personal work. Ah! brethren, the power of the church very much lies under God in the personal influence of her members. On this platform I feel that I am a long way off from you. I wish I could devise some mode of speech by which I could thrust my hand into your hearts and get my soul to pulsate close by yours to make you feel what I feel. But between the pulpit and the pew there is too often a great gulf fixed. But you who get your friends into the parlor, and talk concerning eternal things, you have a fine opportunity. Your personal influence then bears with mighty force upon the person with whom you are speaking, and you may hope that a blessing will be the result. Learn you from your adversaries. What is the strength of the shavelings of Rome? What but their conversing with men and women by themselves at the confessional? Who could not prevail, with such an instrument? We, with

nobler ends and aims, must use personal, private conversation in all honest earnestness to bring men to repentance, to faith, and to the foot of the cross.

My brethren, I do not believe that even this will suffice. Abundant Christian work, and hard Christian work, and personal Christian work, must have combined with it inward soul conflict. If your soul never breaks for another, you will not be the means of breaking that other's heart, but when it comes to this, "I must have that soul saved, I cannot bear the thought that it should be cast away"—you are near winning that soul. Suppose it be your child, your unconverted husband, or your brother, and you are enabled to say in yourself, "I have continual heaviness for my kinsmen according to the flesh," so that you could almost sacrifice your own soul if they might but be saved, when it comes to tears the Lord will not deny you.

My brother, when your heart breaks with love to souls they shall be yours. But there must be conflicts. I pity that minister whose life is one of uninterrupted spiritual ease. What, can we see you backslide and not weep till you come back to the cross? Can I know that among these thousands who are listening to my voice, perhaps half are dead in trespasses and sins, and can I be insensible as a marble statue? Then God have mercy upon me as well as upon you! Unhappy souls to be entrusted to the care of one so utterly unfit for such a service. No, the heart must be stirred, there must be an anguishing and yearning for souls. They tell us that in the sea certain waves rise from the bottom, and these cause the ground swells and the breakers. There must be great ground swells of desire within us that souls may, by some means, be delivered from the wrath to come and where these deep heart-searchings are found there must be conversions. Where these four things, of which we have spoken, are the result of the Holy Ghost working in any of you, it is as certain that souls will be saved as that spring will follow when the sun returns from his southern tropic.

We must further note that this is plain from the work itself. For, brethren, souls are not converted as a rule without previous prayer for them on the part of some one or other. Well, then, we must be stirred up to prayer, and the praying which God hears is not that of people half asleep. The petitions which pierce the ears of God are not those that fall from careless lips, they must come from your heart or they will never go to His heart. The importunate pleader prevails with heaven. Souls are saved instrumentally through teaching, but the teaching which saves souls is never cold, dead teaching. God may occasionally bless such words, for He does great wonders, but as a rule the teaching that convinces and enlightens is earnest and enthusiastic.

We have heard of a traveler who, journeying onward, met with one who said, "Sir, the night is dark, and I should not advise you to go on to the river, for the bridge is broken in the middle, you will be in the stream before you know it." This was said in so careless a tone that the traveler went on. He was met sometime afterwards, fortunately for him, by another who again warned him, "The bridge is broken! don't go on, you will be sure to lose your life if you attempt it. You cannot ford the stream and the bridge is broken." The traveler replied, "Why, I have been told that tale before, but the man who told me it spoke in such a tone that I could see through him, I knew it was all a hoax." "Oh, but sir," said the other, "it is true! I have but now escaped myself. I am sure it is true!" "But," said the traveler, "I am not so easily scared." "Well, then," said the other, "I beseech you once again do not go on, for you will perish," and rushing up to him he said, "I will not let you go." He grasped him and held him fast. "Now," said the other, "I believe you have spoken the truth, and I will turn with you."

So there are some who warn souls of their danger in such a careless tone, that they create an unbelief which many an earnest tongue will not be able to dispel. But if you get hold of the soul and say to it, "I will not let you perish," if you say to your friends as Whitefield would say to his congregation, "If you perish it shall not be for want of praying for, it shall not be for want of weeping over, if you are damned it shall not be because my heart was cold towards you," you will win them, they will be led to believe from your earnestness. Who knows how many your earnest spirit may bring to Jesus? Praying and teaching if effectual must be earnest, and hence when the Spirit comes to save the sons of men He always gives us earnest praying men and earnest teachers.

But, brethren, teaching is not all. We must come to persuasion with men, and that persuasion must be very persevering. Certain men we must dog day after day with our entreaties. Some souls will not come with one invitation, they must therefore be plied with many. I remember a minister who went to see a dying laborer, and the man growled from his bed, "Tell him to be gone—I want none of the like of him to disturb me." He called again, and received the same rude answer. He called again, and went halfway up the stairs, he heard an oath, and would not intrude. He continued to call till he had numbered twenty times, and the twenty-first time the man said, "Well, as you are so set on it, you may come in," and he did go in, and that soul was won for God.

Humanly speaking where had that man been but for persevering zeal? When the Lord means to save men by you, He will give you perseverance in seeking them, He will work in you mightily by His Spirit, you will feel a determination that twist and turn as they may with indefatigable earnestness of self-destruction, you will still pursue them if by any means you may prevent their everlasting misery.

Earnest zeal is a natural result of the Holy Spirit's working upon the souls of men. Whenever the Spirit of God comes, He sanctifies in men the natural instinct which leads them to wish others to be like themselves. Whether a man is bad or good, he seeks to make others like himself, the Holy Ghost lays hold of this, and constrains Christians to desire to bring others to their state of mind. This done, He arouses in the Christian mind the commendable principle of love to our fellow men.

Having experienced the blessedness of salvation for ourselves, we desire to see others enjoying like happiness. The patriot's bosom glows with the same passion as before, but now it is refined and purified, and he prays for his nation that not only it may be free, but that the Spirit of God may make it free indeed.

The Holy Spirit bestirs in us the impulse of gratitude, "Has Christ saved me?" then the man exclaims, "I will live for Him." The Spirit gives impetus to that suggestion, and we resolve that since Jesus has loved us so, we will give to Him all that we are, and all that we have.

In addition to this, the Holy Spirit sanctifies many other natural emotions, such for instance as that which we sometimes call the *esprit de corps*, by which men are moved to desire the prosperity of the community to which they belong. The Holy Spirit makes us feel one with Christ's church, and we ardently desire her success. A holy emulation as to which shall serve the Master most runs through our ranks, not that we may get honor, but that we may honor *Him*. We cannot endure it that our brethren should go to the war and we sit still. We begin to be afraid lest the denunciation should go forth against us, "Curse you Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty." Inspired by such feelings we rush to the fight that we may rescue souls for Christ.

Then the Spirit in some men, I pray it may be in your case, my dear friends, sheds abroad the love of Christ at such a rate that the soul is all on fire to exalt Christ. Nay, in some He has made this sacred passion to eat them up till they have been consumed with holy zeal. Like men inspired, like ancient apostles, certain choice spirits have lived the life of Christ on earth with an awful vehemence of enthusiasm. Wherever such men are raised up, God is about to save souls. Whenever you listen to a man who is carried away by an all-consuming desire for the glory of God, you may conclude that he is the instrument of God to thousands, his lips shall feed many, and he shall be the spiritual progenitor of tribes of believers. Thus where the Spirit of God comes, energy is evinced and souls are saved, but we do not find it otherwise.

I would have you notice, once more, that *the whole history of the church confirms what I have stated*. When the Holy Spirit descended, there were two signs of His presence, the one was a rushing mighty wind, the other was the tongue of fire. Now if the Holy Spirit intended to do all the work Himself, without using us as earnest instruments, the first emblem would have been stagnant air, and the next might have been a mass of ice, or what you will, but certainly not the tongue of fire. The first emblem was not only wind, but it was a mighty wind, and not only that, but a rushing mighty wind, as if

to show us that He intended to set every spiritual sail in the most rapid motion, and as birds are drifted before the gale, so would He compel His people forward with His mighty influences.

The other emblem was fire, a consuming, devouring, imperial element. May we be baptized in the Holy Ghost, and in fire, so shall we know what is meant by the symbol. Our Lord's commencement of the Gospel ministry was signalized by vehemence. Here is His own experience, "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Christ's ministry and life were notably earnest, He was clad with zeal as with a cloak. His apostles also were men so vehement, that in their earliest deliverances they were thought to be drunken with wine.

Every era of the church's prosperity has been marked by this same holy violence. Hear Chrysostom speak, he is no player upon a goodly instrument, he gives forth no dulcet tones for gentle ears. Listen to his denunciation of the Empress Eudoxia! Hear how he denounces the sins of the times! How vehemently he calls upon men to escape for their lives because of coming judgment!

Listen to Augustine, his vehement tones you will not soon forget. Turn to the notable era of the Reformation. The men who wrought the Reformation were no dullards, no men of polite speech, of elegant chilliness and dainty sentences.

Luther was a type of them all, vehement to the extreme of vehemence. I say not that their natural violence was the power which wrought the Reformation, but that the Holy Ghost made their hearts vehement, and so they wrought marvels. And we, dear brethren, if we are to see in these days a genuine revival of religion, worthy of the name, must return to the old enthusiasm which once made the church fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. O that we may live to see it, and the Lord's name shall be glorified!

The conclusion of the whole matter is just this. Let us combine the two things of which we have spoken. Dear brethren, let us rely upon the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost only. Let us not go a warfare at our own charges. Let us believe that without the Lord nothing good can be done. But let us rest assured that Jesus is never absent where He gives the spirit of prayer, as He has given to this church, and that He never deserts those to whom He vouchsafes holy zeal for His kingdom, such as He has bestowed on many here present. Let us be encouraged by His presence.

Gideon, when he obtained the token of the fleece wet with dew, and when by night he heard the story of the barley cake that overturned the tents of Midian, did not straightway go to his home and renounce the enterprise, because God was with him. No, but on the contrary, thus encouraged he gathered together his three hundred valiant men in the darkness of the night, they broke the pitchers, bade the torches shine, and shouted the watchword, "The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon! The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon!" Even so be it with us at this hour. Knowing that God the Holy Ghost is with us, let us lift the cry amid the midnight of our age, "The sword of the Lord, and of His Son Jesus!" and we shall see what God will do, for He will surely put to flight the armies of the aliens, and get to Himself renown.

But brethren, let us combine with this confidence in the Holy Spirit, the most earnest effort on the part of everyone to do all we can. I have a scene before my mind's eye at this moment, I see in this Church and neighborhood the counterpart of the mountain side when the multitudes were fainting for lack of bread. They must be fed, Christ willed it. The disciples must bring their barley loaves and fishes—what were they among so many? Christ must break and multiply. The disciples must receive from His hand, they must then go among the many, the fifties and the hundreds, and break the bread that Christ had blessed, for the hungry must be fed, not only men, but women and children must be satisfied.

Behold, my brethren, this great city hungry and faint, and ready to die. Bring hither, all you disciples of Christ, your loaves and fishes—I mean not to me but to the Master. What you have of ability, however slender, bring it out. Christ will not begin to multiply till you have brought forth all you have. Miracles are not to be expected till nature is brought to a *nonplus*. Bring out then, whatever of talent or grace you have, consecrate all to Jesus, and then as He begins to multiply stand ready as your Master's

servants to wait upon the crowd, and if they push and clamor, yet weary not; break still the bread till every soul shall have been supplied.

Go on, go on, and do not say the toil is hard, it is so blessed to do good to others. It is thrice blessed, nay, sevenfold blessed, to turn a sinner from the error of his ways, and save a soul from death. Nay, weary not, though you have been so long at it that your spirit is faint. My brother, your physical frame is weary, but be of good cheer. Do you not hear them? Hearken, I pray you! Up yonder, there are angels bending from their thrones, and I think I hear them say, “How blest a work to feed the hungry, and those men how honored to be permitted to hand round the Master’s precious gift!” Do they not whisper, “We would gladly be with them”?

One bright spirit thinks he would exchange his crown with the lowest of the disciples, if he might share the service of Gospel teaching. Might they not envy you, those blessed harpers upon the sea of glass, because you can do what they cannot, you can tell of Jesus, you can fetch in the prodigals, you can find the lost jewels for the Master’s crown!

I charge you, my brethren, by the living God, unless your religion be hypocrisy, help me this month, help my brethren the elders and deacons, help us every one of you. By the blood that bought you, if you be indeed redeemed, by the Holy Ghost who is in you, except you be reprobates, by everything that God in loving-kindness has done for you, I charge you come to the help of the Master in this the hopeful hour.

So may the Lord do unto you as you shall deal with us this day. If you shall indeed consecrate yourselves to Him, and serve Him, may He enrich you with the increase of God, and may the peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds, but if you refuse your service, the Lord shall judge you. He that knows his Master’s will and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—COLOSSIANS 1.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.